

Legal by Nature



Hart Law's Quarterly Newsletter



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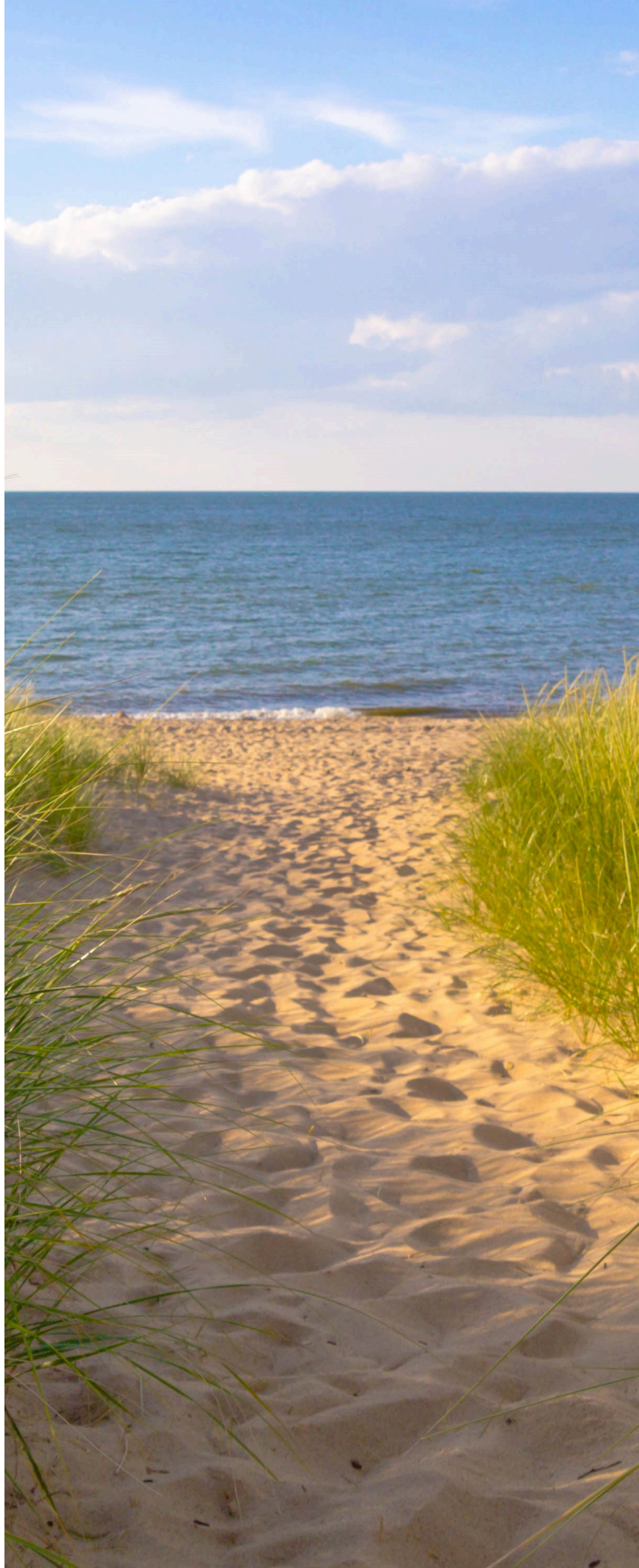
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AN INTRODUCTION FROM ATTORNEY JOHN M. HART, III

Dear Friends, Neighbors, and Members of Our Community,
Summer has arrived in Northeastern Pennsylvania, bringing with it longer days, warmer weather, and countless opportunities to enjoy the outdoors with family and friends.

At Hart Law, we often talk about the importance of maintaining a healthy work-life balance, and for my family, summer is the season when we make the most of our time together. We love camping, whether it's pitching a tent under the stars or hooking up the camper and heading out for a weekend adventure. We've already enjoyed our first trip of the year to Lackawanna State Park, with several more visits planned throughout the summer. We're also looking forward to our annual trips to Maine and the beach, traditions that have become highlights of the year for our family.

This summer is especially exciting because our oldest son, Jack, recently wrapped up his first season of T-ball. Watching him learn the game, make new friends, and experience the excitement of being part of a team reminded me how quickly these moments pass and how important it is to enjoy them while we can.

That same appreciation for family, community, and the outdoors is what inspired Legal by Nature. We created this publication to celebrate the people, places, and traditions that make Northeastern Pennsylvania such a wonderful place to live, work, and raise a family.

As always, our team remains ready to help you navigate life's legal challenges so you can spend more time focusing on what matters most. We hope you enjoy this issue, get outside, make some memories, and take advantage of everything our region has to offer this summer.

Thank you for being part of our Hart Law family.

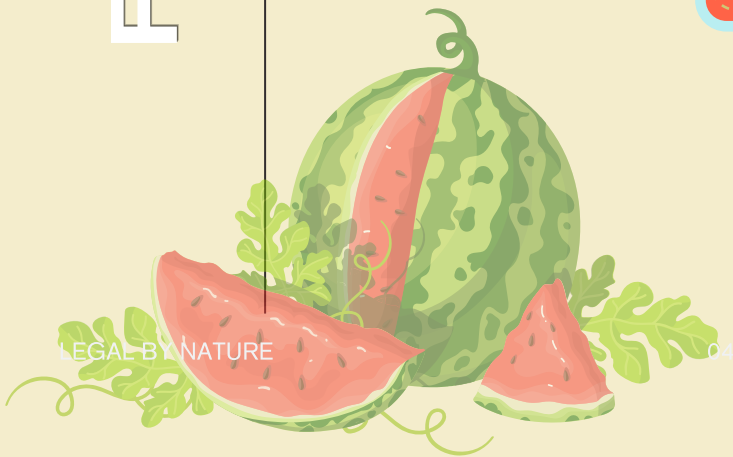
And as always — if you need a lawyer, Be Smart. Call Hart.

Warmly,

John M. Hart, III
Attorney & Founder, Hart Law

Fun Fact About Me

I never liked watermelon until recently. Weird right? Here's to the Summer of Watermelon!



So You Want to Be John Dutton?



BY JOHN M. HART, III, ESQ.
PHOTOGRAPHY: DALLE

Every year, especially as summer approaches, people begin dreaming about owning a piece of land of their own. Maybe it's a few wooded acres for hunting, a place to park a camper on weekends, or the future site of a dream home.

If you've ever watched Yellowstone, you know the feeling. For a moment, you start picturing yourself as John Dutton—just a man and his land. No neighbors. No HOA. No one telling you what you can and can't do. Just open space and endless possibilities.

Then reality shows up.

As an attorney, I've represented enough property owners over the years to know that vacant land often comes with surprises hiding beneath the surface. The beautiful view may be sitting on wetlands. The perfect building lot may not pass a septic test. The camper you planned to park there may run afoul of local zoning regulations. The property line may not be where you think it is. And the "extra lot" that everyone assumed came with the property may actually belong to somebody else entirely.

Vacant land can be one of the most rewarding purchases you'll ever make. It can also be one of the most complicated.

Before you sign on the dotted line, there are a few things every buyer should know.



**"IT'S MY LAND.
CAN'T I JUST PARK MY
CAMPER THERE?"**

One of the most common questions I hear involves recreational vehicles, campers, and motorhomes.

Many people find a nice piece of land and assume that because they own it, they can simply park a camper there and spend weekends enjoying the outdoors.

The answer is often, "It depends."



Most municipalities have zoning ordinances that regulate how land can be used. While some areas may permit occasional recreational use, others may prohibit overnight occupancy of campers on vacant land or impose restrictions on how long a camper may remain on a property.

I've represented clients who were surprised to learn that owning the land was only part of the equation. Local zoning regulations, sewage requirements, setback requirements, and other municipal rules can all affect how property may be used.

Before purchasing property for recreational purposes, it is worth taking the time to review the local zoning ordinance and understand exactly what is permitted.

IS THE PROPERTY ACTUALLY BUILDABLE?

Another mistake buyers sometimes make is assuming that every vacant parcel can eventually become a building lot.

Unfortunately, that's not always the case.

Purchasing land and building a home often involves far more than simply obtaining a building permit. Depending on the location and circumstances, several steps may be required before construction can even begin.

For many rural properties in Pennsylvania, one of the first questions is whether the property will support an on-lot septic system. This often requires a percolation, or "perk," test to determine whether the soil can adequately absorb wastewater.

A failed perk test can dramatically impact the usefulness and value of a property.

In addition, buyers should consider:

- Road frontage and legal access
- Utility availability
- Minimum lot size requirements
- Stormwater regulations
- Environmental restrictions
- Municipal approvals
- Sewage planning requirements

If the property is being divided from a larger tract, subdivision approval may also be required. In those situations, a surveyor will often prepare a subdivision plan and legal description that must be approved and recorded before the new parcel can legally exist.

The development process can be straightforward, but it can also become complicated very quickly if proper due diligence is not performed beforehand.

WHEN THE FEDERAL GOVERNMENT GETS INVOLVED

One of the more memorable situations I encountered involved a client who purchased property with plans to develop it in the future.

After the purchase, the client discovered that a portion of the land had been identified as wetlands.

Most people picture wetlands as a swamp or marsh. In reality, wetlands can sometimes appear to be ordinary wooded or grassy areas depending upon the season and conditions.

The problem is that wetlands are often subject to extensive environmental regulation.

Activities such as filling, excavating, grading, or altering wetlands may require permits and approvals. Depending on the circumstances, agencies such as the United States Army Corps of Engineers and environmental regulators may become involved.

What initially appeared to be a straightforward development project can suddenly become far more expensive, time-consuming, and restricted.

That doesn't necessarily mean the property has no value. It simply means that buyers should understand what they are purchasing before they purchase it.

“THOSE CONVERSATIONS AREN'T PLEASANT”!



MAKE SURE YOU'RE BUYING WHAT YOU THINK YOU'RE BUYING

One issue that comes across my desk more often than you might expect involves confusion over property boundaries.

Several times over the years, people have contacted our office after purchasing a home because they later discovered that a portion of what they believed was their yard was not actually included in the sale.

Sometimes the neighboring lot had been maintained by previous owners for years. Sometimes the grass was mowed as one continuous yard. Sometimes a realtor innocently described the property in a way that left buyers with the impression that additional land was included.

Then months or years later, a problem arises and everyone discovers that the vacant lot next door is actually a separate parcel owned by someone else.

Those conversations are never pleasant.

The reality is that what matters is not what everyone assumed. What matters is what is described in the deed and reflected in the property's legal description.

THE IMPORTANCE OF TITLE SEARCHES AND TITLE INSURANCE

This is one of the reasons title searches and title insurance are so important.

A title search can uncover issues such as:

- Easements
- Rights-of-way
- Boundary concerns
- Ownership defects
- Prior liens
- Restrictive covenants
- Access issues

Title insurance can provide valuable protection against certain title defects that may not be discovered before closing.

In fact, our office has received numerous calls from property owners who encountered problems after purchasing property that likely could have been identified earlier through proper due diligence and title review.

The cost of a title search and title insurance is often insignificant compared to the expense of resolving a property dispute after the fact.

TRUST, BUT VERIFY

Vacant land can be an incredible investment. It can become a hunting property, a future homesite, a family campground, or simply a place to escape the noise of everyday life.

But before you channel your inner John Dutton and stake your claim on a piece of paradise, take the time to understand exactly what you're buying.

Review the deed.

Review the legal description.

Understand the zoning.

Confirm the property is buildable.

Investigate environmental concerns.

Obtain a title search and title insurance.

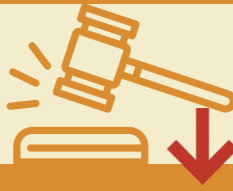
And if your plans involve building, subdividing, developing, or using the property in a unique way, seek professional guidance before closing.

The best time to discover a problem with a piece of property is before you buy it—not after.

And if that unfortunate discovery comes after the purchase, remember to be smart... Call Hart.



QUICK HIT LEGAL



Q&A

SUMMER EDITION



Q

Can I be held responsible if someone gets injured in my swimming pool?

Possibly. Property owners have a duty to maintain reasonably safe conditions and supervise known hazards.

Q

Do I need a written contract for home improvement work?

Absolutely. A written contract helps define expectations, costs, timelines, and protects everyone if disputes arise.

Q

Can I record a conversation in Pennsylvania?

Generally, no. Pennsylvania is a two-party consent state, meaning all parties must consent to the recording in most situations.

Q

What happens if I buy vacant land without doing my homework?

You may discover later that you can't build on it, access it, subdivide it, or use it as intended. Always investigate before purchasing.

Q

If my child causes damage while visiting someone else's property, am I responsible?

In some circumstances, yes. Parents can be held financially responsible for certain acts committed by their minor children.

Q

Can I back out of a real estate contract after signing it?

Not simply because you've changed your mind. Most real estate contracts are binding once signed unless a contingency applies.

Q

Do I need a will if I'm married?

Yes. A will ensures your wishes are followed and can simplify the administration process for your family.

Q

What should I do after a car accident?

Call police, seek medical attention if needed, take photographs, gather witness information, and notify your insurance company.

Q

Can I bring my own title company to a real estate closing?

Yes. Buyers generally have the right to choose their own title company and are not required to use a lender's or realtor's recommendation.

Q

What's the biggest mistake people make after a personal injury accident?

Waiting too long. Delays can result in lost evidence, faded memories, and complications with insurance claims.

Questions?
Contact Hart Law for
a personalized
consultation in any
practice area.
570-344-2626

The Wizard Behind the Curtain

**Featuring Joseph Fernandes, Entrepreneur, Investor,
Landlord, Mechanic, Father, and Friend of Hart Law**

“Success built slowly is success built to last.”

BY JOHN M. HART, III, ESQ.
PHOTOGRAPHY STOCK



Most people spend their lives talking about ideas.

Joe Fernandes spends his life building them.

I've represented Joe on legal matters since 2017, and when I say legal matters, I mean all legal matters. Over the years, Hart Law has assisted Joe with real estate transactions, business ventures, contracts, corporate matters, landlord-tenant issues, and just about every area of law our firm practices. Somewhere along the way, Joe became more than a client. He became a close friend of our firm and, more importantly, a close friend of mine.

Ironically enough, he's also our landlord now at our office on Grove Street in Dunmore.

But before Joe became a client, I knew of him because of my late father.

At the time, my father owned The Dunmorean newspaper. One day he was reading an article highlighting Pennsylvania's growing popularity among businesses seeking a more favorable environment to grow and expand. The article featured a young entrepreneur named Joe Fernandes.

Joe wasn't opening a coffee shop.



He wasn't opening a coffee stand.

He wasn't selling lattes either.

Joe owned Socafe, a wholesale coffee company. He sourced coffee beans, roasted them, packaged them, and distributed coffee products to major retailers across the country. The article explained how Joe had purchased an old textile factory in Dunmore and planned not only to relocate his operation here from Newark, New Jersey, but also to create opportunities for other entrepreneurs by offering affordable space for startup businesses and new ventures.

After reading the article, my father immediately knew he wanted to meet this guy.

After tracking Joe down, he learned something else interesting.

Joe was about my age.

My father suggested we sit down and get to know each other.

Our first conversation took place at the Friendly Sons of Saint Patrick Dinner.

We hit it off immediately.



“WHERE MOST PEOPLE SEE PROBLEMS, JOE SEES POSSIBILITIES.”

At the time, I was beginning to grow my real estate and business practice. Joe was expanding his footprint in Northeastern Pennsylvania. Neither of us knew it then, but that introduction would grow into a friendship and professional relationship that continues to this day.

Over the years, I got a front-row seat to watch Joe operate.

What fascinated me most was how much of the operation he personally controlled. While many people imagine large-scale businesses as being run by layers of management and departments, Joe was the engine driving everything forward.

He sourced beans. He oversaw roasting. He managed production. He coordinated packaging. He arranged shipping. He handled vendors.

And somehow he still found time to pursue new opportunities. The business supplied major retailers including Dollar Tree and Walmart, yet Joe remained remarkably hands-on throughout the entire process.

As time went on, Joe saw changes coming within the coffee industry. Rather than waiting for the market to dictate his future, he adapted.

He shifted more of his focus toward real estate. And not the easy kind.

Joe never seems interested in projects that come without risk. The properties he acquires are often the kinds of buildings that cause most people to turn around and walk away. Massive century-old factories. Aging mechanical systems. Infrastructure that requires equal parts vision, patience, and courage. Where most people see problems, Joe sees possibilities. What separates him from many investors is that he doesn't simply hire someone else to solve those problems.

He learns how to solve them himself.

That's why I've often jokingly referred to him as "The Wizard of Oz."

Not because he's mysterious.

Because so many people look at these enormous projects and assume there must be an army of people working behind the scenes.

Then you pull back the curtain and realize it's mostly Joe.

Negotiating acquisitions.

Managing tenants.

Repairing infrastructure.

Planning renovations.

Learning new systems.

Solving unexpected problems.

He's involved in every aspect of the process.

From changing a light switch attached to a century-old fixture to negotiating a million-dollar transaction, Joe handles every aspect of these massive undertakings.

That's just how he's wired.

I've always considered myself fairly hands-on. I have a 1971 Monte Carlo that I've owned since I was sixteen years old. Over the years I've changed the oil, installed speakers, and even tackled replacing a radiator. For someone with limited mechanical knowledge, I thought that was fairly impressive.

Then I learned Joe had purchased a 1970 Chevrolet Chevelle and completely swapped the engine while converting the car from an automatic transmission to a manual transmission.

For those who don't know cars, that's a lot more than an oil change.

As it turns out, Joe is also a master mechanic.



The more I learned about him, the more I realized that he simply isn't intimidated by things he doesn't know yet.

Most people encounter a challenge and ask, "Who can I hire?"

Joe asks, "How can I learn this?"

That mindset explains a lot about his success.

He's never afraid to venture into unfamiliar territory. One day that territory happened to be fitness.

Joe became interested in weightlifting and improving his health. When UNO Fitness closed, most people saw a gym going out of business.

Joe saw opportunity.

He purchased the equipment and opened Grove Fitness.

When I asked him about it, he explained that he wasn't looking to get rich. He simply wanted a place to pursue a hobby and offset some of the costs.

Of course, in typical Joe fashion, the gym became successful too.

What I've come to learn is that Joe doesn't really have hobbies.

He has projects.

And every project eventually turns into something bigger than anyone anticipated.



“JOE WELDS TOO... OF COURSE HE DOES.”

In fact, I was reminded of Joe’s reputation just this past weekend.

I attended a bachelor party with a group of friends and business owners. Earlier in the day we visited Lehigh Sporting Clays to shoot clay birds. If you’ve never been there, I highly recommend it. It was a fantastic experience and one of the most enjoyable outings I’ve had in a long time.

During the trip, one of the business owners asked how I had heard about the place.

"My friend and client, Joe Fernandes," I replied.

The gentleman immediately laughed.

"Oh, you know Joe... Joe Fernandes."

The way he said it made me laugh because he didn’t need to explain further.

He went on to tell me that no matter where he goes, someone always seems to know Joe Fernandes. Whether through commercial real estate, business ventures, Grove Fitness, local development projects, or one of Joe’s countless other endeavors, his name always seems to come up.

As I listened, I realized something.

That’s pretty remarkable for a guy who moved here from New Jersey less than ten years ago.

Most people spend decades trying to establish roots in a community, especially our quirky community in Scranton. Somehow, Joe managed to become one of those people everybody knows.

That’s not something you can buy.

That’s something you earn.

Yet perhaps the most surprising side of Joe isn’t found in business at all.

It’s found at home.

A few years ago, I attended a housewarming gathering at his home around Christmas time.

I was speechless.

The house itself looked like something from a magazine. At one point Joe pointed to a bridge connecting portions of the home and casually began explaining the steel construction involved and how challenging parts of it were to weld.

That’s when I learned Joe welds too.

Of course he does.

At this point, nothing surprises me.

More recently, I stopped by his property again. The place was almost unrecognizable. Free-range chickens wandered across the driveway. Roosters strutted around the yard. Geese and ducks occupied every available patch of grass.

A baby gate stood in front of the main entrance—not to keep children inside, but to keep birds outside.

Joe greeted me wearing jeans and muck boots.

Then he said, "Come on, I'll show you the rest."

The rest included goats, sheep, ducks, geese, a llama, and multiple animal enclosures surrounding a large pond.

And then I met the water buffalo. Yes.
A water buffalo.

Joe explained that he acquired it from a petting zoo that realized it would become too large to manage as it matured. He pointed to the small horns beginning to emerge and informed me that they would eventually span nearly three feet in width.

Naturally, I asked the obvious question. "How do you have time for all of this?"

His answer was simple.
He starts before sunrise every day.
The animals alone require two to three hours of care.

That's when it clicked.

The same curiosity, work ethic, and willingness to take on challenges that fueled his professional success also fuels his personal life.
There is no separation.

Joe approaches life the same way he approaches business.

If something interests him, he learns it.

"HE ISN'T JUST SOMEONE YOU WANT TO DO BUSINESS WITH... HE'S SOMEONE YOU WANT TO KNOW."

If a problem exists, he solves it.

If an opportunity presents itself, he explores it.

While I've referred to him as the Wizard of Oz for years because he's the man behind so many successful operations, after seeing his property firsthand, I began to think another nickname might fit as well.

At home, he's a little more like Joe Exotic!!!

Fortunately, with significantly fewer legal problems.

All kidding aside, Joe Fernandes is one of the most impressive individuals I've had the privilege of knowing.

He's an entrepreneur, investor, mechanic, builder, gym owner, landlord, animal caretaker, and problem solver. More importantly, he's a loyal friend.

Joe Fernandes isn't just someone you want to do business with.

He isn't just someone you want representing your interests.

He's someone you want to know.

Because the most successful people aren't necessarily the ones in suites, or behind a big desk.

They're the people willing to learn, willing to work, and willing to take on challenges that everyone else avoids. Joe has been doing exactly that for as long as I've known him.

And I have a feeling he's just getting started.

SEE WHAT OUR TEAM IS UP TO IN JUNE

HELP US PLAN JUNE 2027!

TBD

As summer gets underway, our community calendars begin filling up with vacations, graduations, little league games, camping trips, and family time. Rather than adding another event to an already busy month, we're using this opportunity to start planning ahead. We'd love to hear from you! What would you like to see Hart Law do in the community next June? Whether it's a family event, volunteer project, educational workshop, charity fundraiser, or something completely different, send us your ideas. Message us on social media, email us, or stop by the office. Some of our best events have come directly from community suggestions, and we'd love your help making June 2027 our best one yet.



SEE WHAT OUR TEAM IS UP TO IN JULY

HART LAW CELEBRATES OUR COUNTRY'S 250TH

SATURDAY, JULY 4, 2026 @5PM

This Fourth of July, the Hart Law team will be celebrating America's 250th Anniversary in a truly all-American way—enjoying a RailRiders baseball game with family, friends, and our community. If you're attending the game, keep an eye out—you just might run into a member of our team. And when the final out is recorded, stick around for what is sure to be one of the most spectacular fireworks displays of the year. We can't think of a better way to celebrate our nation's milestone birthday than baseball, community, and fireworks under the summer sky. 🇺🇸 🇨🇦 🇫🇷



ST. JOSEPH'S PICNIC FRESH-SQUEEZED LEMONADE

SAT, JULY 25, 2026 3PM- 6PM

Be sure to stop by the St. Joseph's Center Summer Festival at Marywood University and cool off with a glass of freshly squeezed lemonade. As a member of the Young Lawyers Division of the Lackawanna Bar Association, Attorney John Hart will be volunteering behind the lemonade stand, helping serve one of the festival's most popular refreshments in support of a great cause. While you're there, enjoy everything the festival has to offer—from pizza fritas and classic fair food to games, entertainment, and family-friendly activities. It's a great way to spend the day while supporting an organization that does so much for our community.



2026

JULY

SUN	MON	TUE	WED	THU	FRI	SAT
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12	13	14	15	16	17	18
19	20	21	22	23	24	25
26	27	28	29	30	31	

PARK(ING) LOT CLEANUP

SUNDAY, JULY 19, 2026 11AM-3PM

Keeping Dunmore looking its best takes all of us. On Sunday, July 19, the Hart Law team will be spending the morning giving our parking lot across the street from the office a little extra attention. We'll be picking up litter, freshening the landscaping, planting new greenery, and doing our part to help keep our corner of Dunmore clean, welcoming, and beautiful. We're also adding a fun new feature by painting a marked walking lane around the parking lot. Whether you're looking to stretch your legs during lunch, get a few extra steps in after work, or simply enjoy a quick walk outdoors, we hope it provides another small way to encourage healthy living in our community.

It's a simple project, but we believe small efforts can have a big impact. We take pride in being part of this community, and this is just one of the many ways we're committed to keeping Dunmore looking clean, fresh, and inviting for everyone who calls it home.



SEE WHAT OUR TEAM IS UP TO IN **AUGUST**

2026

AUGUST

SUN	MON	TUE	WED	THU	FRI	SAT
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THE HART LAW COMMUNITY CORNHOLE CLASSIC

SATURDAY AUGUST 29

Grab a partner and join us for some friendly competition at the Hart Law Cornhole Tournament! This community event is all about bringing people together for a fun afternoon while supporting a great local cause. All proceeds from the tournament will be donated to a local charitable organization, helping make a difference right here in our community. Whether you're playing to win or just cheering from the sidelines, your participation will help turn a simple game into meaningful support for our neighbors. Stay tuned for registration details, and start thinking about who you're bringing as your teammate!



HART LAW SUMMER PADDLE

SUNDAY, AUG 2, 2026

On Sunday, August 2, our team will spend a half day enjoying a leisurely paddle down the Susquehanna River. It's a simple opportunity to get outside, slow the pace for a few hours, and appreciate one of Pennsylvania's most scenic natural resources. We spend so much of our time in offices, courtrooms, and conference rooms that it's refreshing to trade them for open water, fresh air, and good conversation. Sometimes the best way to recharge isn't with an elaborate vacation—it can be as simple as a paddle down the river with good people.





You Don't Have to Go Far to Get Away

BY JOHN M. HART, III, ESQ.

PHOTOGRAPHY: JOHN M. HART, III, ESQ.

Sometimes the best vacations are right in your own backyard. Discover why a simple weekend at Lackawanna State Park has become one of our family's favorite traditions—and proof that you don't have to travel far to make lasting memories.



Last issue, I wrote about one of my favorite places on earth—Key West. It's a place my family and I look forward to visiting each year, and one that never disappoints.

But vacations don't always require airplanes, passports, or weeks of planning. Sometimes the best getaway is only fifteen minutes from home.

For my family, that's Lackawanna State Park.

Over the years, our camper has taken us to some incredible places. We've hauled it hundreds of miles to Maine, the beaches, and destinations throughout the Northeast. Those trips create memories we'll cherish forever. But one of our favorite vacations is also our shortest drive.

It's amazing how simply pulling into the campground can make everyday life feel a thousand miles away.

One of the greatest advantages for me is that I can truly enjoy a family vacation while still being available if the office needs me. As anyone who practices law knows, our profession rarely fits neatly into a nine-to-five schedule. Even when the office is closed, the work often isn't. Clients need answers. Deadlines don't pause. Cases have a way of following you home.

My wife will be the first to tell you that my mind is always racing. If I'm not thinking about a current case, I'm planning for tomorrow, brainstorming new ideas for the firm, or replaying conversations from earlier in the day. It's difficult to separate work from family life, even with the best intentions.

A long weekend at Lackawanna State Park helps me at least attempt to do just that.



The camper becomes our little cabin in the woods. Phones get put down a little more often. The television stays off. Meals become wonderfully uncomplicated. Hot dogs, burgers, pancakes over the griddle, and of course, s'mores around the campfire. Instead of everyone disappearing into separate rooms, we're together. The boys play outside from morning until bedtime, and somehow the days seem just a little longer.

Living in Scranton has its advantages. We enjoy being part of a neighborhood. We love walking the sidewalks, seeing neighbors outside, and always having something happening nearby. Those are things many of us take for granted.

But city living comes with tradeoffs.

We don't have acres of land for our children to explore. We don't have open fields where they can ride bicycles until they're exhausted. Traffic is constant, and the glow of streetlights makes it nearly impossible to appreciate a truly dark night sky.

The campground gives us all of that.

Our boys can spend hours riding their bikes around the campground roads without us constantly worrying about speeding traffic. We spread out instead of feeling confined. At night, we look up and actually see stars. We gather around a campfire without wondering if the neighbors will think something is on fire or call the fire department because of the smoke drifting across the fence.



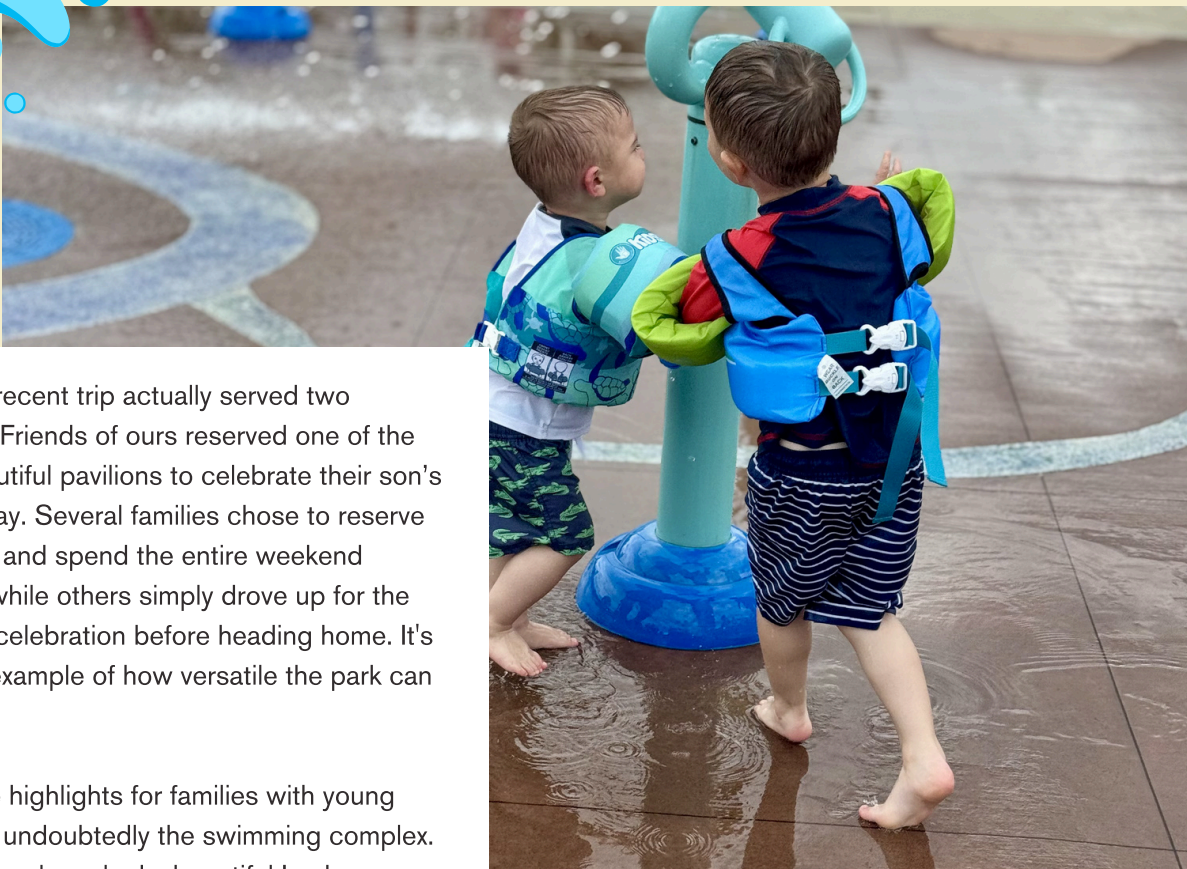
Sometimes those simple experiences end up becoming the most meaningful ones.

Despite its name, one thing that surprises many people is that Lackawanna State Park isn't operated by Lackawanna County at all.

It's a Pennsylvania state park, owned and maintained by the Commonwealth through the Department of Conservation and Natural Resources (DCNR). Park Rangers and DCNR staff do an outstanding job maintaining the grounds, trails, campground, and recreational facilities that so many local families enjoy throughout the year.

And there truly is something for everyone.





Our most recent trip actually served two purposes. Friends of ours reserved one of the park's beautiful pavilions to celebrate their son's first birthday. Several families chose to reserve campsites and spend the entire weekend together, while others simply drove up for the afternoon celebration before heading home. It's a perfect example of how versatile the park can be.

One of the highlights for families with young children is undoubtedly the swimming complex. The large pool overlooks beautiful Lackawanna Lake, creating one of the more scenic public pools you'll find anywhere in the area. Right beside it is a fantastic splash pad that our boys absolutely love. When hunger inevitably strikes, the nearby snack stand serves all the campground classics—hot dogs, chicken tenders, fries, ice cream, and other quick favorites that somehow taste even better after spending the day outdoors.

Of course, no trip to Lackawanna State Park is complete without one mandatory stop.

Manning Farm Dairy.

It's become a family tradition, and quite honestly, I don't think we'd be allowed back into the camper if we skipped it.





I've eaten ice cream in plenty of places over the years, but Manning's remains one of my favorites. My personal recommendation? Cookie Monster. It's bright blue, loaded with cookies-and-cream pieces and chocolate chip cookie dough, and somehow manages to be even better than it sounds. If you've never tried it, you're missing out.

One of the things I appreciate most about camping locally is that it reminds me vacations aren't measured by distance traveled. They're measured by memories made.

The kids don't remember how many miles we drove. They remember roasting marshmallows until they accidentally caught on fire.

They remember riding bikes with their friends. They remember catching frogs, looking for sticks to add to the fire, splashing through the spray park, and laughing until they fell asleep exhausted each night.

As adults, we're often guilty of believing we need to spend more money, travel farther, or plan something elaborate in order to create meaningful family experiences. The truth is, sometimes all we need is a campground fifteen minutes away.

Whether you own a camper, pitch a tent, reserve a cabin elsewhere, or simply pack a picnic and spend the afternoon, Lackawanna State Park is one of the greatest outdoor assets our community has. We are incredibly fortunate to have it practically in our own backyard.

If you've never experienced it, I encourage you to reserve a campsite for a weekend or even spend a day exploring everything the park has to offer. You might be surprised how refreshing it feels to unplug, slow down, and enjoy the outdoors without traveling hundreds of miles.

Sometimes the best vacations aren't the ones that take us the farthest from home.

They're the ones that remind us how fortunate we are to live where we do.



SHARE YOUR FAVORITE CAMPING SPOTS WITH US ON FACEBOOK

CASE LAW IN A NUTSHELL

UNDERSTANDING PENNSYLVANIA'S ATTRACTIVE NUISANCE DOCTRINE



Summer in Northeastern Pennsylvania means backyard barbecues and afternoons by the pool. But if a child wanders onto someone else's property and is injured in a swimming pool, is the homeowner automatically liable?

Not necessarily.

Pennsylvania's Attractive Nuisance Doctrine is an exception to the general rule that property owners owe little duty to trespassers. While the law recognizes that young children may not appreciate certain dangers, Pennsylvania courts have repeatedly held that an ordinary swimming pool is not automatically considered an attractive nuisance. Liability typically requires more than the mere presence of water, such as an unusual hazard or other facts that make injury reasonably foreseeable.

Quick Takeaways

- **Children Receive Special Protection:** Pennsylvania recognizes that young children often cannot appreciate dangerous conditions the same way adults
- **Pools Are Not Automatically Attractive Nuisances:** Courts have consistently held that ordinary pools and ponds generally do not create automatic liability.
- **Unusual Dangers Matter:** Liability is more likely where an artificial condition presents an extraordinary or hidden danger beyond the normal risks associated with water.
- **Foreseeability Is Critical:** Property owners may have greater responsibility if they know—or should know—that children are likely to trespass onto the property.
- **Age Makes a Difference:** Older children who understand the obvious dangers of water are generally less likely to recover under the doctrine.

COMMONWEALTH COURT GUIDANCE ON ATTRACTIVE NUISANCE & SWIMMING POOLS

Irwin Savings & Trust Co. v. Pennsylvania R. Co. (Pa. 1944)

The Pennsylvania Supreme Court reaffirmed that a pool or pond is not an attractive nuisance simply because children may be drawn to it. Ordinary bodies of water do not create automatic liability absent an unusual danger.

Key Point:

A swimming pool alone is generally insufficient to establish liability.

Cooper v. City of Reading (Pa. 1958)

The Court recognized an important exception, explaining that although water hazards are ordinarily obvious, liability may exist where a body of water presents an unusual or extraordinary danger beyond the normal risks associated with swimming or drowning.

Key Point:

Hidden or extraordinary dangers can change the legal analysis.

G.W.E. v. R.E.Z., Jr. (Pa. Super. Ct. 2013)

The Superior Court emphasized that the focus is not whether the condition is attractive to children, but whether the landowner knew—or should have known—that children were likely to trespass onto the property.

Key Point:

Foreseeability of child trespass—not simply the attractiveness of the pool—is often the deciding factor.

Long v. Manzo (Pa. Super. Ct. 1996)

The court declined to apply the Attractive Nuisance Doctrine where a thirteen-year-old knowingly dove headfirst into the shallow end of a pool. Because the child appreciated the obvious danger, recovery was barred.

Key Point:

The doctrine primarily protects children who are too young to recognize the risk themselves.



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